



State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

*** NEWS RELEASE ***

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Ten projects recognized for strengthening rural Wisconsin

Burmaster presents 2008 Standing Up for Rural Wisconsin awards at Capitol ceremony

MADISON—State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster recognized 10 programs and activities that strengthen rural communities when she presented her 2008 Standing Up for Rural Wisconsin awards during a ceremony today at the Capitol in Madison.

“Despite increasingly difficult challenges, the teachers, students, and citizens of rural Wisconsin continue to do extraordinary work for the betterment of their schools and communities,” Burmaster said.

“These awards recognize the efforts of rural residents to shape the lives of our children as well as the future of this great state. They are changing the world and are true champions of education.”

This is the third year that Burmaster has presented Standing Up for Rural Schools, Libraries, and Communities awards. Projects receiving recognition were

A New Library for Lena. For decades, the Lena library operated out of a back room in the Village Hall. Alfred Goldstein, a regular patron, left money through his estate to build a new facility. The community then pitched in: the school board donated land, two local homebuilders volunteered as construction managers, the Lions Club raised funds for equipment and technology, and citizens donated money for books. The library, which opened in 2006, has tripled circulation, provides meeting space for book clubs and other groups, and supports a teen board that promotes activities for youth. **Lena Public Library Director Jennifer Thiele** accepted the award.

A Season of Giving. The Waupun Area School District partners with the Waupun Food Pantry, Holiday Help Committee, National Bank of Waupun, Avenue of Angels, and the Waupun Chamber of Commerce to make the holiday season special for all members of the community. Six separate activities provide outreach to the young, the aged, the needy, and the lonely. The greatest impact, however, is not the contributions but the lessons participating youth learn. They see cooperation among the community partners and are developing a habit of giving and recognizing needs in their community. **Jeff Finstad**, principal in the Waupun School District, accepted the award.

Bridges to the Future. Four Darlington High School students built a 44-foot covered bridge as a project for their woods technology class. Financed by Joseph Wiegel, a local

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businessman, the bridge has been well received in the community. The project spurred the city of Darlington, Darlington Main Street, Lafayette County, and private citizens to build a 22-foot bridge in the city's development park and to begin fundraising for a proposed 54-foot bridge to span the Pecatonica River, joining the Cheese Country Trail and a local campground. Accepting the award were students, and possible bridge-building entrepreneurs, **Jerred Jacobsen, Tim Houtakker, Josh Singer, and Jordan Torstenson.**

Elcho School District Childcare Program. The Elcho School District operates the only group childcare facility in a 22-mile radius. Started seven years ago in response to community needs, it has served 233 children. Three-fourths of students in 4-year-old kindergarten through second grade have been part of the childcare center. The center has worked on countless collaborative programs with the Antigo School District and service agencies in Langlade County. The center's strong foundation has attracted visits or inquiries from 17 school districts wanting to replicate components of the collaborative program. **Childhood Director Betsy Gruszynski** accepted the award.

Manawa Community Actions and Resources to Engage Students (C.A.R.E.S.). Manawa C.A.R.E.S. provides area youth with opportunities to engage in meaningful activities that encourage healthy life choices and positive connections in the community. Manawa C.A.R.E.S. sponsored an evening faith-based assembly for over 800 people, partnered with the FFA to hold a Safety Fair, coordinated a suicide prevention workshop for teachers, conducted healthy cooking classes, and provided many other programs and resources for the community. Manawa C.A.R.E.S. gives youth in the community a voice and a part in the decision-making process. **Sondra Reynolds**, special education director for the Manawa School District, accepted the award.

Phelps High School Rural Civic Engagement Project. Partnering with the Rural School and Community Trust, the University of Wisconsin-Extension, and the Phelps Lions Club, the Phelps High School Rural Civic Engagement Project team developed a community dialogue model, which led to improved relationships among the school and community in Phelps as well as neighboring communities. Project activities included surveys of graduates to understand rural economic development, civic engagement, and rural educational and employment opportunities; an article on the survey results by Rick Rolfsmeyer for the *Wisconsin School News*; community artwork; and public forums to craft a vision for the community's future. **Chris Meier**, English teacher at Phelps High School, accepted the award.

Project LEAD the Way — Rural Initiative. The Cuba City, Southwestern, Highland, Iowa-Grant, and Platteville school districts formed a consortium to bring Project Lead the Way, a pre-engineering and technology program to their students. Through their collaboration—which involves local businesses, development corporations, the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, and Southwest Technical College—they found a cost effective way to promote science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) through rigorous and relevant courses linked to the economic interests of both the students and communities. The consortium presented at the 2007 National Tech Prep Conference and the 2008 New Wisconsin Promise Conference. **Greg Quam**, Platteville High School technology education coordinator, accepted the award.

Seussabration. In 2004, the Oneida Community Library Youth Department celebrated 100 years of Dr. Seuss with a "Seuss-centennial," that included green eggs and ham, stories, games, guest stars, and prizes. The celebration, which involves library staff and personnel in other departments of the Oneida Nation, was repeated in 2005 and is becoming an annual event. It has been an excellent way to bring families into the library and provides an

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opportunity to focus on food safety and nutrition, issues that relate to the incidence of diabetes in American Indian people. **Kymerley Pelky**, children's liaison for the Oneida Community Library, accepted the award.

Seven Wonders of Merrill. For centuries, people have been awestruck by the Seven Wonders of the World, while missing the treasures in their own backyard. Thus, the Seven Wonders project was created to encourage awareness and appreciation for the treasures in Merrill and to raise funds for the Merrill Historical Society. The contest, which began in May, drew more than 300 nominations. A committee of community members narrowed the nominations to 15 finalists. In mid-June, the public voted for their favorites at 25 cents per vote. The seven finalists receiving the greatest number of votes were unveiled at a September celebration as "Merrill's Seven Wonders." Accepting the award were **Bob Gruling**, retired elementary principal and historical society member, and **Marie Rein**, Seven Wonders chair.

Tiger Manufacturing. The Webster School District partnered with the Nexen Group Inc. to organize and develop Tiger Manufacturing, a school-based industry. The classes subcontract with local cabinetmakers and carpenters to manufacture parts for installation on local jobs. Students are key in running the business, with opportunities in research, design, fabrication, and problem-solving as well as gaining technical skills and real world experience. In addition, students learn they have a unique responsibility as they work on a team. **Roy Ward**, technology education teacher, accepted the award.

Burmaster concluded the program commending individuals and organizations for their efforts on behalf of Wisconsin's rural schools, libraries, and communities. " These projects, no matter how large or small, reverberate throughout your communities and will have lasting positive effects for our children today and the generations to follow. Thank you for your tremendous contributions to Wisconsin's rural communities," she said.

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NOTE: This news release is available electronically at http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpi2008_48.pdf. Photos of recipients and of the awards ceremony are available in the State Superintendent's Photo Gallery <http://dpi.wi.gov/sprntdnt/photos/2008.03.07.RuralAwards>.